Gain Control over Pace and Scheduling of Work

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Workplace and Social Engagement

Lack of control over pace and scheduling at work can cause a level of uncertainty in employees. It is important employees learn how to recognise these feelings and raise them before stress sets in and impacts their physical and mental health. Uncertainty can create a sense of feeling powerless and may cause one or more of the following:

- Lack of enthusiasm and motivation
- Low energy, ongoing tiredness and irritability
- Feelings of anxiousness
- Difficulty sleeping and headaches

As an employer, how can you support your team? Here are a few actions you can take to help employees gain control over the pace and scheduling of their work:

Provide clear expectations and priorities aligned with role responsibilities and outcomes.
Schedule regular check-ins to ensure outcomes are being met and that support is in place if they are not being met. Within these check-ins, you need to look at status of work, barriers to work and course correction to get back on track.
Where practicable, mutually agree how, where, and when employees work.
If viable, offer flexible hours to help employees work around any issues or commitments they have in their personal lives.
Provide personal and professional development, including coaching and / or mentoring.

To help your team (and yourself) manage workloads, a few tips may be:

1. Schedule focus time for the morning
The early morning hours with a fresh mind can be the best time to get things done.

2. Check email and social media accounts at specific times of the day
Email and social media accounts can soak up a lot of your time and distract from key priorities. Booking allocated time in calendars can help minimise multi-tasking, which has been proven to decrease productivity.

3. Schedule time in your calendar to ensure people do not book your time needed for admin
It can be stressful when you know you have something to do but can't seem to find the time to do it, so "own" your calendar and learn to say no.

**4. Turn off sounds and push notifications**
Every time you hear a sound from your phone or your computer, it interrupts what you are doing. You want to look at it, and it's hard to resist. Remove the temptation and distraction and refocus the attention on what you need to get done, rather than what technology wants you to do.

FIRST STEPS
NGĀ HIKOI TUATAHI
PART OF ACTIVATE TĀMAKI MAKAURAU

5. Get up and move, whether working remotely or the office, get out at lunch time
If you can get away from your desk for an hour and eat in the park or go for a walk, do it. Getting fresh air will refresh your mind and set you up for success to complete tasks.

Time is one of your most precious resources, so own it, value it and respect it. You own and protect your schedule like your career depends on it, because it does. The more control you have over your time, the more you will be able to focus on your priorities, be productive and enjoy your life.

Below is a useful image to understand what we can control and what we cannot control, but rather influence. It was introduced by author Stephen R. Covey and demonstrates a representation of things we can do something about and have a level of control over, influence, or things beyond our ability to influence.
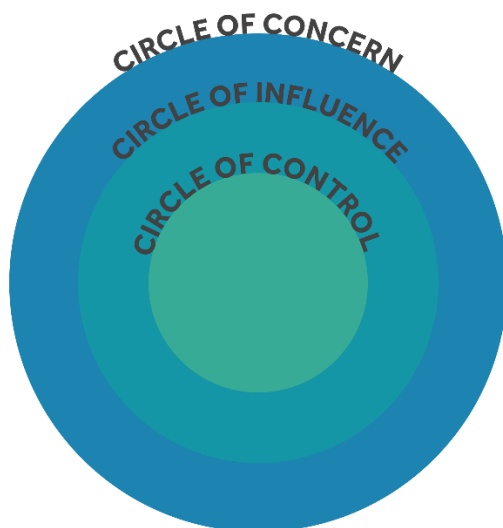
CIRCLE OF CONCERN:
Things we are aware of and affect us, but we have little to no influence or control over.
Example: the weather, the economy and government decisions.

CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE:
Things we can influence through our relationships.
Example: family, friends, coworkers and the decisions they make.

CIRCLE OF CONTROL:
Things we can directly control.
Example: body language. emotions and personal decisions.

For example, employees may be concerned about the attitude of one of their co-workers, yet can only influence, not control it. So, they can change how to respond to their workmate but not control it. However, to have choice in how they respond, they need to have a level of both self-awareness and environmental awareness.

It is not just about what you do, but what you notice and interpret from your experience with people and activities within your environment. Having greater levels of self-awareness positively impacts your choices and this has an impact on control and execution of work priorities.

An individual's Circle of Influence is related to the quality of relationships and the quality of the conversations that happen within those relationships. Unfortunately, there will always be the destructive teammates and leaders that you will not be able to influence. If not dealt with, these behaviours can quickly derail positive workplace culture. It is important that employees feel safe to raise concerns and be heard. It is also important that employers, leaders, and business owners act quickly to manage the behaviour and mitigate the risk of harm to both employees and the business. You cannot control toxic behaviour, but you can control how you respond to it.

Take a moment to reflect on your responsibilities as an employer and how the Circle of Influence can impact how you make decisions and the direction of the organisation.

Think about where you invest your time and energy, and remember, focusing on concerns outside of your influence, can increase stress, worry and even stronger emotions like anger and fear.

Remember, when it comes to checking in with employees, always seek to identify what they are doing well, where they can improve and further develop, and what support they need to be successful in their role.